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USDA PLEASE PASS FAS/ITP PSHEIKH AND EPURDY

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TAGS: [EAGR](#) [GH](#) [WTO](#) [AGRICULTURE](#)

SUBJECT: AGRICULTURE REPS BRING MESSAGE TO GHANAIS: SPEAK UP

1. Summary: USDA representatives met with numerous Ghanaian officials to seek support for the US position on food aid and market access in the WTO Agricultural Negotiations, to highlight US efforts in Sub-Saharan Africa and to confirm invites to the Ministerial Conference and Expo on Agricultural Science and Technology. With the March 31 deadline for modalities on the agriculture agreement, USG officials urged the Ghanaians to move on these issues before time runs out. End Summary.

2. Patricia Sheikh, Deputy Administrator of International Trade Policy at the USDA, Emiko Purdy and Joseph Lopez, International Trade Policy economists and Jamie Rothschild, the Regional Foreign Agricultural Service Officer, held bilateral discussions with GoG officials in Accra on March 17. The session was opened by Deputy Minister of Agriculture Dr. M.K. Antwi, who stated that Ghana needed to be allowed further access to outside markets.

WTO Negotiations

3. Sheikh, Purdy and Lopez were focused on delivering the USG message on current WTO Agricultural Negotiations, specifically, concerning the strengthening of the modalities proposed by Stuart Harbinson, the chair of the agricultural negotiations. Ghana has not stated its position on food aid. Patricia Sheikh suggested that as a recipient of food aid, Ghana should use its influence in the Africa group to support the US suggestion that non-governmental organizations and legitimate government-to-government food aid be allowed to continue. Essentially, if Ghana derives some benefit from food aid, its WTO representative should speak up in support of food aid. Sheikh carefully pointed out that the US supports preventing food aid from displacing commercial sales and disrupting local production. However, the experts in Rome at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations are those best equipped to determine whether and what kind of food aid is market-distorting, not the WTO. Ghanaian officials appeared seized by the idea and promised to carefully consider the US position on the issue.

4. Harmonization is key to the US position on domestic support and market access and the Harbinson text is not ambitious enough. Too much trade distorting domestic support is allowed for many countries (i.e. the EU) and the tariff reduction formula does not address the high protection levels of tariffs. Domestic supports reduction should be reworked to address the serious disparity between the EU and the rest of the world. Regarding tariff reduction, USDA officials supported the Swiss formula for cutting tariffs which would bring tariffs down to no more than 25 percent. The Ghanaians, while agreeing with the need to reduce domestic supports that rich countries give their farmers, quickly pointed out tariffs are the only option they have to protect their domestic farm industry. US negotiators then pointed out that the bottom line on the two issues is--for the US to give up something, other countries must do their share and give up something too. The EU must be able to move on the domestic support issue. Poor countries should be able to move on the tariff issue. Otherwise, negotiations will not go forward. Ghanaian officials said they would rely on their Geneva colleagues (one of whom was present) to provide further guidance on the two issues.

US Assistance

5. In response to the need expressed by the Ghanaian contingent for assistance in improving sanitary and phyto-sanitary regulations, Purdy pointed to the nine regional training and information seminars that the USDA had conducted in sub-Saharan Africa over the past two years. She also told Ghanaian officials that an Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) agent being assigned to Accra. The agent will be a part of the West African Trade Hub and will assist with technical assessment of agricultural products destined to the US. USDA cautioned that the due diligence on marketing will not be done by the APHIS agent. That, Sheikh said, is up to the Ghanaians. Assessing their own

competitiveness on a given product should be carefully considered when developing agricultural exports for the US market.

Ministerial Conference

16. US Agriculture officials also clarified the schedule of activities and logistics for the upcoming Ministerial Conference and Expo on Agricultural Science and Technology to be held in Sacramento June 23-25 and hosted by Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman. Ghanaian officials wanted further

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details on the schedule of events in order to determine which Ministers would derive the most benefit in attending. They promised to inform the Embassy who will attend before the May registration deadline.
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